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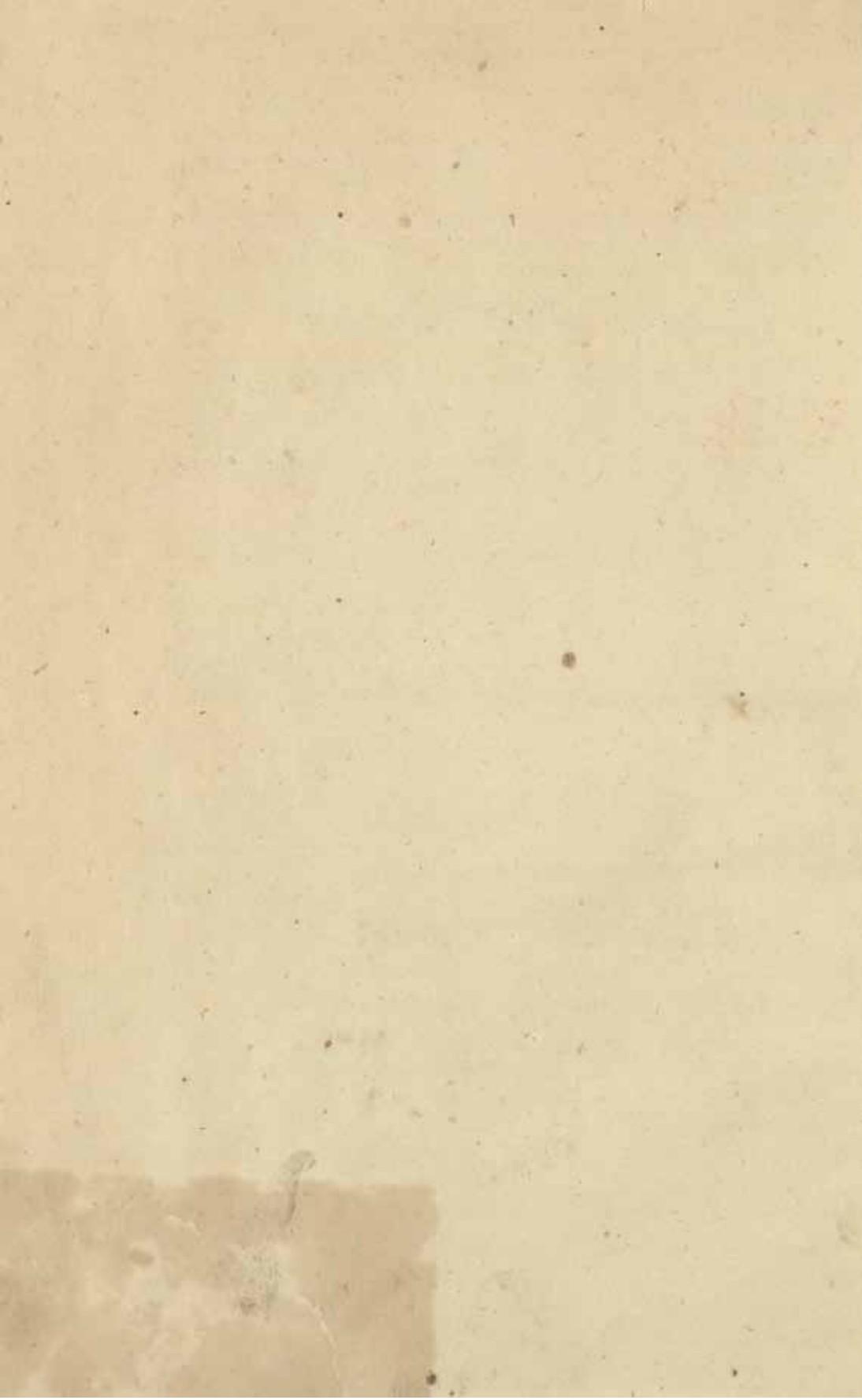
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# THE BRAHMANAIC SYSTEMS OF RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY<sup>1</sup>

*A paper read before the Mythic Society,*

**1910**

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LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

As it is customary with us in the East to begin a subject like this with an invocatory verse, let me open the lecture with a few lines from a Western poet (JOHN LANGHORNE), whose pious sentiments deserve to be echoed by all nations in the world :—

Light of the World! Immortal Mind!  
Father of all the human kind!  
Whose boundless eye, that knows no rest,  
Intent on Nature's ample breast,  
Explores the space of earth and skies,  
And sees eternal incense rise!  
To Thee, my humble voice I raise;  
Forgive, while I presume to praise.

These lines, as rendered into Sanskrit in my *Parivritti-ratnamālā*, run thus :—

लोकैकभानो! परमाव्ययात्मन! विभाजसे त्वं जनको नरणाम् ।  
दिव्यं तदीयं नयनं निबद्धं सुप्रेर्विशालोरसि निर्निमेषम् ॥  
सवंत्रं भूम्यां गगनेऽपि चक्षुसञ्चारितं पश्यति ते सपर्याम् ।  
स्तोतुं भवन्तं मम वाक्प्रहृता क्षन्तव्यमेतद्वहु साहसं मे ॥

<sup>1</sup> To treat of Religion separately from Philosophy is, from the Hindu point of view, an impossible task, as in India especially we see the two mixed up so closely that we cannot think of the one apart from the other. (*Vide* my Paper on 'Kālidāsa's Religion and Philosophy'—contributed to the *Indian Antiquary*, 1910.)

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Oh, may I still Thy favour prove  
 Still grant me gratitude and love,  
 Let truth and virtue guard my heart;  
 Nor peace, nor hope, nor joy depart:  
 But yet, whate'er my life may be  
 My heart shall still repose on Thee!  
 To Thee, my humble voice I raise;  
 Forgive, while I presume to praise.

Which again reads in Sanskrit thus:—

देव प्रसादं तव कामयेऽहं भक्तिं ममार्थेहि कृतज्ञतां च ।  
 धर्मस्सप्तस्यो रमतां मदीये स्वान्तेऽनुयातः क्षमया मुदा च ।  
 वृत्तं मम स्यादिह कीदृशं वा चित्तं तु सक्तं सततं ल्यति स्यात् ।  
 स्तोतुं भवन्ते मम वाक्प्रवृत्ता क्षन्तव्यमेतद्वहु साहसं मे ॥

The Executive Council of the Mythic Society have done me a great honour by allowing me the opportunity of addressing this learned audience. I shall deem myself very fortunate if what I am going to say to-night should be found acceptable to this audience as giving a fairly correct idea of the Brāhmaṇic systems of Religion and Philosophy.

Much has been written, no doubt, and by eminent scholars, on the Vēdānta Philosophy. But so far, the Vēdānta Philosophy has come to mean the Advaita Philosophy as taught by the followers of Śankarāchārya. Very little was known of the Dvaita and the Viśiṣṭādvaita systems till very recently. The English translations of a few works of the Great Reformers—Śrī-Rāmānujāchārya and Madhvāchārya—have been made available to the public only within recent times; but the bulk of the religious and philosophical literature relating to these systems remains as yet untranslated. Thus the precious sentiments of the Śrī-Vaishnava Saints and Sages, for example, which are preserved mostly in the Tamil language, are still a sealed book to Western scholars. Dr. Grierson, the well-known orientalist, bears testimony to the treasure of pious thoughts contained in the Dravidian Religious Literature, and has recently published the translations of some valuable works in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of London.<sup>1</sup> A comprehensive study of the religious or philosophical systems of India may not be quite possible to foreign scholars, who have not made a personal investigation of the creeds and beliefs of the people, as professed in the present day.<sup>2</sup> This defect has

<sup>1</sup> Vide, for instance, Translation of Artha-Pāñchakas, by A. Govindāchārya of Mysore (J.R.A.S., July, 1910).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Monier Williams' Religious Thought and Life in India—(Preface to the First Edition).

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been noticed of late by orientalists, and it is a matter of great pleasure to all that attempts are now being made to study the 'life of the man upon the soil'.

Dr. Grierson, in his Introduction to the *Artha-Pañchaka*, translated by A. Govindāchārya, says (J.R.A.S. for July, 1910):—'I have also left out a few quotations from European writers on the Bhāgavata doctrines whose views are familiar in this country, and, however valuable, do not possess the authority of an Indian Professor of the religion'. It would, therefore, be very profitable if Indian scholars are invited to co-operate with European scholars in the attempt to trace and collect the secret treasures contained in the religious and philosophical systems of India. The labours of orientalists in this field of literature, till now, have no doubt been very laudable; but their conclusions, we are sorry to observe, have become mostly one-sided. Even the latest among them have wrongly identified the Vedānta, as a whole, with only one of its several aspects; and have given it the most misleading title of *Indian Pantheism*. Very few of them have earnestly studied the religious beliefs and philosophical views now current among the peoples of South India. It is a well-known fact that South India was the cradle of Brāhmaṇaic revival. The great reformers, Śankarāchārya, Rāmānujāchārya, Madhvāchārya, all belong to South India; and it is from the teachings of these that a few northern reformers imbibed their spiritual knowledge in later times. Even to-day the Pandits of South India are held in great esteem and veneration by the North Indian scholars and are considered authorities in matters relating to Religion and Philosophy,—as being the custodians of the teachings of the great Ācharyas of old.

It is here in the South of India that the renowned Drāvida Saints (the authors of the 4,000 Divya Prabandha works) and the great Sages who wrote their precious commentaries on them, lived and worked for the elevation of the masses, irrespective of caste or creed.<sup>1</sup>

The three great Brāhmaṇaic communities—the Smārtas, the Śri Vaishnavas and the Mādhyvas—have their representative Maṭhas established by the great Reformers in the South, and the Gurus of these Maṭhas command pre-eminence even to-day, throughout India—the majority of the northern devotees being their disciples.

Thus we see that South India is the proper place where the Brāhmaṇaic religions can be best studied.

It may be observed that all the Brāhmaṇaic systems of religion in India can be comprised within the three well-known original systems based on the Vēdānta, viz.: (1) the *Advaita*, (2) the *Dvaita*, and (3) the *Viśiṣṭādvaita*; all other schools founded on the Vēdānta, are each of

<sup>1</sup> See my Introduction to the *Upadēśa-ratnamālā*, Ananda Press, Madras.

them seen to be, an off-shoot from, or a sub-division of, one or the other of these *three* main systems.

My duty to-night will, therefore, be to lay before you a brief sketch of these three systems of Brāhmaic Religion and Philosophy. It is hardly necessary for me to say that, in the short space of an hour, I cannot be expected to do full justice to these great systems. All that I can hope to do is to mention a few leading points in the doctrines of the respective systems; and by comparing them briefly, to draw some inference as to the nature of the tenets common to all the Vēdāntic schools of thought.

Let us first note briefly what the terms *Advaita*, *Dvaita* and *Viśiṣṭādvaita* mean.

The *Advaita* system recognizes only one entity called Brahman or Ātman and holds the world to be unreal. Hence the name *Advaita* (Non-Dualism or Monism). This system is generally represented by the Smārta community among the Brāhmans.

The *Dvaita* system recognizes all the three entities—matter, soul and God; and holds that they are entirely distinct from one another, and that no two of them can be identified. Hence it is called the *Dvaita* (Dualism). This system is represented by the Mādhyva community of the Brāhmans.

The *Viśiṣṭādvaita* also recognizes all the three entities—matter, soul and God; but holds that, although they are by nature distinct from one another, God or the Supreme Soul is often identified (in the Upanishads) in a figurative sense with the Universe of matter and souls—which is (as it were) His body. Matter and souls being the inseparable attributes of God at all times—in a subtle or *sūkshma* stage before creation, and in a gross or *sthūla* stage after creation, this system lays stress on the Identity of God in both these stages. Hence it is called the *Viśiṣṭādvaita* (Qualified Monism). This system is represented by the Śri-Vaishnava community of the Brāhmans.

With this preliminary idea about the *three* terms, let us now proceed to examine the origin of these three systems.

It may be observed at the outset that the Brāhmaic religious or philosophical system presents itself in *three* phases from the earliest times known to history or literature. To say that there was only one religion throughout India at some remote age is to ignore the contents of the Upanishads and other philosophical texts on which the Brāhmaic religious systems are based. The Upanishads contain clear references to *three* schools of thought current in India from time immemorial. There are *three* distinct classes of passages in the Upanishads—

(i) अमेदश्वतयः (Non-Dualistic Texts)—or passages that apparently declare the existence of only one Reality (Ātman or Brahman), and speak of all differences as unreal.

(ii) भेदश्रुतयः (Dualistic Texts) or passages that openly declare the distinctions between matter, souls and God (i.e. distinctions between every two individuals among them)—all the three being treated as real entities.

(iii) घटकश्रुतयः (Reconciling Texts) or passages that reconcile the above two apparently contradictory classes of texts—by proving *diversity in unity*.

A few examples will make this division of the Vedantic texts obvious.—

(i) *Non-Dualistic Texts* (अभेदश्रुतयः)

(1) 'There is nothing here that is many and varied. He who sees this world as though it is varied, obtains death from death.'

(*Brih. Up.*, iv. 4.)

(2) 'But where there is duality, as it were, there one sees another; but where to one all this becomes Ātman, there who shall see whom; (shall see) by what; and who shall know, which, and by what?' (*Brih. Up.*, ii. 4-4.)

(3) 'That which is all this is this Ātman.' (*Brih. Up.*, iv. 5-7.)

(4) 'For whenever he perceives in Him even the smallest distinction, then indeed there is fear for him.' (*Taitt. Up.*, ii. 7-1.)

(5) 'He who knows the Brahman becomes the Brahman alone.'

(*Mund. Up.*, ii. 3-9.)

(6) 'He is not all this. Let him worship Him as Ātman Himself.'

(*Brih. Up.*, i. 4-7.)

(7) 'Existence alone, my dear child, this was at the beginning;—one only, without a second.' (*Chhānd. Up.*, vi. 2-1.)

(8) 'That thou art.' (*Chhānd. Up.*, vi. 8-7.)

(9) 'One alone, Nārayana, was (at the beginning).' (*Mahop.*, i. 1.)

(10) 'All this was at first one alone, the Atman.'

(*Aitarēya Up.*, i. 1-1.)

(ii) *Dualistic Texts* (भद्रश्रुतयः)

(a) (Soul and God clinging to matter) 'Two birds, which possess similar attributes and are inseparable friends, cling to the same tree; one of them eats the sweet fruits of the Pippala tree, while the other shines in splendour without eating at all.'

(*Mund. Up.*, iii. 1-1.)

(b) (God and the Universe) 'The two un-born, the intelligent and the non-intelligent, are the Lord and the non-Lord.'

(*Svēt. Up.*, i. 9.)

(c) (Characteristics of the soul as distinguished from matter and God.) 'Then whoever feels "I smell this," that is the soul.'

(*Chhānd. Up.*, viii. 12-4.)

- 'Who is the soul? He is that person who is luminous in the proximity to the Prānas in the heart and wholly consists of knowledge.' (Brih. Up., iv. 3-7.)
- 'He is indeed, the seer, the hearer, the taster, the smeller, the thinker, the knower, the doer, and is the person who is made up of intelligence.' (Praśna. Up., iv. 9.)
- 'Having known the soul (Ātman) and (God) the Prime-mover (Prēriti) as separate from one another.' (Śvēt. Up., i. 6.)
- 'He, the cause, is the Lord of (souls) the lords of the senses.' (Śvēt. Up., vi. 9.)
- The Lord of matter (Pradhāna) and souls (Kshētrajñas), the Master of the qualities. (Śvēt. Up., vi. 16.)
- From this, the Māyin (God) creates, this Universe; and in that is another (the soul) fettered by Māyā. (Śvēt. Up., iv. 9.)
- 'Having learnt that, and being freed from name (nāma) and form (rūpa), attains the Divine Person, who is the most Supreme.' (Munḍ. Up., iii. 2-8.)

### (iii) Reconciling Texts (घटकश्रुतयः)

- (1) 'May I become manifold and be born.' (Chhānd. Up., vi. 2-3.)
- (2) 'He thought—May I create the worlds.' (Ait. Up., i. 1-1.)
- (3) 'The eternal among the eternals, the intelligent among the intelligents, who, though One, fulfils the desires of the many.' (Katha. Up., v. 13, and Śvēt. Up., vi. 13.)
- (4) 'He who has entered within is the ruler of all things that are born and is the Soul of all.' (Yajur-Āranyaka, iii. 20.)
- (5) 'He whose body is the soul.' (Brih. Up., v. 7-22.)
- (6) 'He whose body is the earth.' (Brih. Up., v. 7-3.)
- (7) 'What exists within that small space inside the heart, that is to be sought after.' (Chhānd. Up., viii. 1-1.)
- (8) 'Of whatever nature a man's worship is in this world, of that same nature that man becomes after death.' (Chhānd. Up., iii. 14-1.)
- (9) 'From whom all these things are born, in whom when born they live, and whom they enter when they perish, do thou desire to know that well; that is the Brahman.' (Taitt. Bhṛigu, i. 1.)
- (10) 'He who understands and knows all.' (Munḍ. Up., i. 1-9.)

It is to be observed that of these classes of texts, (1) the *Advaita* system recognizes the authority of the Non-Dualistic Texts alone, and rejects the rest as referring to the *vyāvahārika* (the apparent and not the real) side of knowledge; (2) the *Dvaita* system attaches importance

to the Dualistic Texts only and tries to explain away the rest; (3) whereas the *Viśiṣṭādvaita* system reconciles the Non-Dualistic and the Dualistic Texts by the application of the remaining class of texts (घटकश्रुतयः)—thus recognizing the authority of all the Upanishadic passages.<sup>1</sup>

We thus see that the Upanishads present to us *three* different stages of thought, although they are to be construed together so as to give us a consistent idea. Hence it is that all the three systems—the Advaita, the Dvaita and the *Viśiṣṭādvaita* trace their doctrines to the common source—the Upanishads. It is true that these three systems have, for their common authorities, several later treatises also, such as the *Brahma-Sūtras*, the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, the *Smritis*, the *Itihāsas* and the *Purāṇas*. But it is a gross mistake to suppose that the Advaita system had its origin in Śankarachārya, the Dvaita system in Madhvāchārya and the *Viśiṣṭādvaita* in Rāmānujāchārya. These Great Reformers only renovated the three systems that had been already formulated by their predecessors;<sup>2</sup> and, by writing their valuable commentaries (*Bhashyas*), came to be known as the *Bhāshyakāras* of the respective systems.

We have thus shown that the germs of these three systems are found in the Upanishads themselves; and the chronological order of the three great Reformers above named has therefore nothing to do with the order of treatment that I have herein adopted, to facilitate comparison—viz. (*first*) the Advaita system, (*secondly*) the Dvaita system and (*thirdly*) the *Viśiṣṭādvaita* system.

### THE ADVAITA SYSTEM

TAKING the Upanishadic passage—‘*Tat-tvam-asi*’—‘That thou art’, one can see that the word ‘*That*’ represents the Supreme Being (or Para-Brahman), the word ‘*thou*’ represents any individual being or soul (*jīvātman*) that is addressed, and the verb ‘*art*’ shows the identity of the two beings (represented by *That* and *thou*).

The whole philosophy of the Advaita system is based on the meaning of passages similar to the above.

There is only one entity according to this school—called *Ātman* or *Brahman*. The term *Advaita* means *non-dualism* or *monism*. To identify it with *Pantheism*, as some scholars have done, is not correct, as the Advaitin holds that the Universe is unreal.

<sup>1</sup> Every Vedantic scholar should admit that the Upanishads are, as a whole, a consistent embodiment of philosophical thought; and any interpretation given of them can be considered sound, only if such interpretation is capable of elucidating all the passages in the Upanishads, as giving a consistent idea throughout.

<sup>2</sup> Refer to the lists of Āchāryas that preceded these Reformers and to their valuable works among the *Guru-paramparais* of the three sects.

The *Ātman* (or Brahman) is one only and supreme, and all the worlds that seem to have been created by the Supreme Being are in the manner of dreams. These are the creations of *avidyā* or nescience which belongs to the Supreme Being *Itself*. This *avidyā* is *anādi* or without a beginning and is the cause of the various illusory manifestations in the world.

'Sankarāchārya maintains that the knowledge of self is the constant basis of all other kinds of knowledge. That is, the primary and self-evident intuition of self is the basis of all other kinds of knowledge, whether perceptive or inferential, direct or indirect, present, past or future. As we cannot *know* the external objects without *knowing* the self as its knower, we may infer that we cannot *think* of any object without *thinking* of the same self as its knower. Thus the Universe exists only relative to knowledge.'<sup>1</sup>

From this relativity of the world to knowledge, it would appear that there are two distinct entities, viz.—

- (1) the self or soul as the subject of knowledge and
- (2) the world as the object of knowledge.

But this distinction is apparent (व्यावहारिक) and not real (प्रस्ताविक). The essence of the self or soul is knowledge. Every object that presents itself before this self or soul is found to be pervaded by knowledge; therefore no object can be distinct from self, which in its essence is knowledge. It follows therefore that in every act of knowledge, there is only one undivided entity—call it self or soul or knowledge—which is both subject and object, because it knows only itself and nothing else. There is in fact no *knower* or agent (ज्ञाता), and nothing *knowable* (ज्ञेय); there is only *knowledge* (ज्ञान). And this knowledge is called *Ātman* or *Brahman*. The whole world which is full of manifestations in the form of *knowers* (or souls) and *knowables* (objects) is unreal; whereas *Knowledge* alone, called *Ātman* or *Brahman*, is real. This is what constitutes the *Advaita* or *monistic* theory.

'Our knowledge of space and time cannot disprove this theory; for the world of time and space, the objective world, has no independent existence, but is comprehended in the self. The belief in its independent or real existence is the result of *avidyā* (nescience or ignorance)—which can be destroyed only by a true knowledge of Self or *Ātman*. With the merging of time and space in the self, the idea of a plurality of souls becomes groundless; and when the souls or agencies that introduce finitude into reality are shown to be unreal, finitude also disappears, and the Infinite alone remains.'

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Pandit Sthānātha Tattva-bhūshāṇ for some of the ideas and passages quoted here.

Thus our own self or soul, the soul in each of us, which seems to be finite, is really nothing but Brahman—generally represented by the words सत्यं, ज्ञानं, अनन्तं—which do not stand as attributes to Brahman, but only go to prove the Reality or Existence of only one entity, Brahman. Brahman is similarly identified with Bliss or *Ananda*. All these *terms* should be taken to negative the reality of objects other than Brahman thus :—

सत्यं=(असत्याद्ब्राह्मच) other than Un-Truth.

ज्ञानं=(अज्ञानाद्ब्राह्मच) „ Ignorance.

अनन्तं— „ Finitude.

आनन्दः— „ Non-Bliss.

Thus we see that Brahman, according to the Advaitin, is निर्गुण or without attributes; for no qualifying epithets or attributes to Brahman can be admitted as real, as such admission would disprove the non-dualistic theory. No differentiating attributes (*visheshas*) can be found in Brahman which is one undivided and infinite mass of knowledge—spoken of as *Akhanda-Sachchidānanda*.

This निर्गुणवाद, again, is based on the interpretation of some Upanishadic passages, and has been fully expounded by Śankarāchārya in his works. The following stanzas from his *Aparokshānubhūti* contain the essence of the foregoing theory :—

त्रहैवाहं समशान्तस्सचिदानन्दलक्षणः ।

नाहं देहोऽह्यसद्रूपो ज्ञानमित्युच्यते वृधैः ।

निर्विकारो निराकारो निरबद्धोऽहमव्ययः ।

नाहं देहोऽह्यसद्रूपो ज्ञानमित्युच्यते वृधैः ॥

निरामयो निराभासो निर्विकल्पोऽहमाततः ।

नाहं देहोऽह्यसद्रूपो ज्ञानमित्युच्यते वृधैः ।

निर्गुणो निष्क्रियो निलो नित्यमुक्तोऽहमच्युतः ।

नाहं देहोऽह्यसद्रूपो ज्ञानमित्युच्यते वृधैः ॥

निर्मलो निश्चलोऽनन्तशुद्धोऽहमजरोऽमरः ।

नाहं देहोऽह्यसद्रूपो ज्ञानमित्युच्यते वृधैः ॥

So far, we have been considering the Advaita doctrine from the ideal or *pāramārthika* standpoint. But from the practical or *vyāvahārika*

standpoint, the Advaitins admit the whole universe to be real; and just like the other schools of the Vedanta, hold that the world has been created, is preserved and destroyed by *Īśvara*. Brahman, from the व्यावहारिक standpoint, is called इश्वर, and is supposed to contain all the good attributes that may be conceived of—as all-knowing, all-powerful, merciful, just, holy and as the friend and saviour of finite souls. This *practical* Brahman is, therefore, called सगुणब्रह्म (or Brahman with attributes), as distinguished from the *ideal* Brahman, which is named निर्गुणब्रह्म (or Brahman without attributes). The *ideal* Brahman which is the only Reality, appears to itself through the effect of *Avidyā* (Nescience) or *Māyā*, as practical Brahman, and when subject to this illusion of *Māyā*, sees *diversity in unity*. This *Avidyā* or *Māyā* is without a beginning; but it has an end. It is the ultimate cause of this संसारवन्ध or worldly bondage, which appears to us to be due to Karma. When *Brahman* realizes its true nature and attains its ideal or पारमार्थिक stage, *Avidyā* or *Māyā* vanishes, and there is *Moksha* or freedom from bondage.

The practical or व्यावहारिक stage of Brahman is compared to our dreamy condition, and the world is compared to the things we see in our dreams. The world is also compared to the image that we see in the mirror, and is, therefore, said to have no real existence. When the ideal or पारमार्थिक stage is attained by Brahman, there will be an end of *Māyā*; and the world vanishes. Brahman will then realize its own undivided nature. This is compared to our condition when awake from a dream. The whole of this theory is summed up by Śankarāchārya in the following introductory verse of the *Dakshinā-mūrti-stotrā* :—

विश्वं दर्पणदृश्यमाननगरीतुल्यं निजान्तर्गतं  
पश्यन्नात्मनि मायया बहिरिवोद्भूतं यथा निद्रया ।  
यस्साक्षात्कुरुते प्रबोधसमये स्वात्मानमेवाद्वयं  
तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ॥

We have now seen that Śankarāchārya speaks of two kinds of *Brahman*—one real or ideal (पारमार्थिक), and the other unreal or practical (व्यावहारिक). The *unreal Brahman* or इश्वर is placed at the head of all created beings and is called *Apara-Brahma* or कार्यब्रह्म—i. e. the Lower Brahman or the Effect-God; whereas the *real Brahman* is called

परब्रह्म or कारणब्रह्म—i.e. the Higher Brahman or the Cause-God. We have seen that the former is called सगुणब्रह्म and the latter as निर्गुणब्रह्म.

Śankarāchārya is a devout worshipper of सगुणब्रह्म (in the form of Vishṇu or Śiva) although he says that such a Being has no real existence from a philosophical point of view. The various *stotras* composed by him are full of devotion to this सगुणब्रह्म; and one or two characteristic verses from his हरिमीडेस्तोत्र may be quoted as illustrating his pious sentiments:—

सर्वज्ञो यो यथ हि सर्वस्सकलो यो  
यथानन्दोऽनन्तरमुणो यो गुणधामा ।  
यथाव्यक्तो व्यक्तसमस्तसदसद्यः  
तं संसारध्वान्तविनाशं हरिमीडे ॥  
सर्वक्रास्ते सर्वशरीरी न च सर्वः  
सर्वं वेत्येवेह न यं वेत्ति च सर्वः ।  
सर्वक्रान्तर्या मितयेत्यं यमयन् यः  
तं संसारध्वान्तविनाशं हरिमीडे ॥

Śankarāchārya is equally devoted to Vishṇu and Śiva; and he regards them as identical in spirit with the Supreme Being. Even the followers of Śankarāchārya, the *Smārtas*, are all worshipping Vishṇu as well as Śiva in their houses and temples. In fact, the Advaita doctrine regards every living being in the Universe as identical with Brahman; and this accounts for Śankarāchārya's identifying his own Preceptor गोविन्दगुरु with God (Gövinda or Vishṇu) in most of his *stotras*.

*Moksha* or liberation from the worldly bondage is also of two kinds, according to Śankarāchārya. Those who are devoted to the Lower Brahman (सगुणब्रह्म) will attain Brahma-lōka, which is described in the Śruti as the Abode of Brahman. Attainment of this Brahma-lōka is called आपेक्षिकी मुक्तिः or *relative liberation*. There will be no return from this Brahma-lōka to the earth, for the liberated souls live there for ages in close proximity to the Lower Brahman; and when this Brahman is merged in the Higher Brahman at the end of the cycle (कल्प), all the souls in the Brahma-lōka will share in his happy fate.

The higher kind of *Moksha* known as परमोक्त्त or *absolute liberation* is attained by the knowledge of one's perfect identity with Para-Brahman

(or Higher Brahman). The soul that attains this kind of liberation is called a जीवन्मुक्त (one that has attained liberation during this life on earth).

To attain this kind of liberation, no *Karma* (or fulfilment of duties) can serve as the direct means. *Jñāna* or Knowledge of Reality alone leads to this *absolute liberation*. *Karma*, in the form of the spiritual exercises enjoined in the *Sastras*, can only purify and prepare the mind for the Path of Knowledge (ज्ञानमार्ग). There are four kinds of spiritual exercises (known as the साधनचतुष्टय) recognized by the Advaitins :—

- (1) नियानियवस्तुविवेकः—or discrimination between eternal and transitory things;
- (2) इहामृतफलमोगविरागः—or non-attachment to the rewards of actions in this as well as in the other world;
- (3) शमदमादिसाधनसम्पत्—or the securing of the various means, such as the control of the mind and the control of the external senses; and
- (4) मुमक्षुब्लप्—or desire for the final emancipation of the soul.

As regards *Bhakti* or Love of God, Śankarāchārya admits<sup>1</sup> that it is the most perfect means of attaining Moksha; but he identifies the highest form of Bhakti with *Jñāna*, as, according to him, Bhakti can secure Moksha only through the Path of Knowledge (ज्ञानमार्ग).

### THE DVAITA SYSTEM

We have already seen that this system is so called because it recognizes द्वेष्ट or difference among the three categories—Matter, Souls and God. The word *Dvaita* strictly means *dualism*, and so it is used to denote difference (or *bhedā*).

According to this school, *Padārtha* or Reality (Category) is of two kinds :—

- (I) Independent (खतन्त्र) and
- (II) Dependent (परतन्त्र).

(I) *Independent Reality* or God is the glorious Vishnu, also called Para-Brahman, who is all-powerful and omniscient, and endowed with all auspicious attributes.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. 'मोक्षकारणसामध्यं भक्तिरेव गरीयसी'—(Vivēka-chādāmaṇi).

(II) *Dependent Reality* is of two kinds:—

- (i) *positive* (भाव) and
- (ii) *negative* (अभाव).

Among the positive again, there are two classes:—

- (1) sentient (चेतन) or the souls and
- (2) non-sentient (अचेतन)—including matter, time, etc.

The sentient beings are of various kinds, the chief of them being:—

- (1) The Eternally Free (नित्या)—Goddess Lakshmi.
- (2) The Released Souls (मुक्ताः)—such as the Devas, Rishis, Pitrīs, Men, etc.
- (3) The Fettered (बद्धः) of whom there are two divisions:—  
 (a) those that are eligible for release or *moksha* and  
 (b) those that are not eligible for release.

Again those that are not eligible for release are—

- (1) either fit for Tamas (Dark Hell) or
- (2) eternally fettered (नित्यसंसारिणः)

Such being the classification of the categories according to the Dvaitins, they recognize five kinds of *difference* (भेद or द्वेष)—

जीवेश्वरमिदा चैव जडेश्वरमिदा तथा ।  
 जीवमेदो मिथ्यैव जडजीवमिदा तथा ।  
 मिथ्य जडमेदो यः प्रपञ्चो भेदपञ्चकः ॥  
 —(परमाश्रुतिः)

That is,

- Difference (1) between God and the sentient beings or individual souls;
- „ (2) between God and the non-sentient (matter, time, etc.) ;
- „ (3) between every two among the sentient beings (or souls) ;
- „ (4) between matter and souls; and
- „ (5) between every two amongst the material things.

This system is directly opposed to the Advaitin's doctrine of Monism or the identity of soul with God. The Dvaitins declare that the soul is entirely distinct from God, and can never be identified with Him. The



term *Brahman* is applicable only to the All-powerful *Vishnu*, as there is no other being that is perfect in all the excellent qualities. It is derived from the root ब्रह्म which refers to the *infinite* nature of the Supreme Being—*infinite* with respect to time, space and qualities; and shows that the Supreme Being is quite distinct from all limited existences, and individual souls. The Vedānta declares that there is only one *Brahman*, and that *Brahman* is infinite or unlimited in nature. The word *Ātman*, as applied to God or *Brahman*, cannot be taken to mean the individual soul (limited *Ātman*), since devotion to that *Ātman* is stated to be the means of final release (or मोक्ष). It is totally inadmissible that the limited and the unlimited *Ātmans* merge together. Nor is it admissible that the different parts of the *Śruti* declare different *Brahmans*, as the Advaitins hold.

The Supreme Being and his qualities are absolutely identical, and they can be still spoken of in different terms. The form seen during meditation by mere imagination is not *Brahman* or God, because He is *non-manifest*. It is by this non-manifest Para-*Brahman* (Supreme Being) or *Vishnu* (i.e. All-pervading) that the Universe is created, preserved, and destroyed; and all the changes in the Universe are subject to His Will. He is the sole dispenser of fruits to the deserving souls, according to their natural merits.

The mundane bondage (संसार) of the *soul* is a fact proved by the unmistakable evidence of *perception*; and freedom from this bondage can be attained only through the Grace of God. *Karma-yoga* or the discharge of pious duties enjoined in the Śāstras is only auxiliary to the attainment of knowledge or *Jñāna*. It is *knowledge* (of *Brahman*) or *Jñāna-yoga* that leads to final deliverance, by securing the Grace of God.

Study of the Vedānta (*Śāstra*) is the only means of knowing the Supreme Being. The power of words is quite capable of directly conveying the attributes of *Brahman*, who cannot be realized except by means of the *Veda* or *Śruti* (the Word). Devotion is the result of the knowledge of God's glory. Only those who possess devotion are fit to study the *Śāstra*.

All that desire for final deliverance or *moksha* cannot attain it; for it is only the *eligible* few possessing the virtuous qualities, that are entitled to study the *Vedānta-Śāstra*; and this eligibility cannot be earned, as it must be found in the natural essence of the soul. Each individual soul has got its own peculiar natural characteristics of eligibility or ineligibility; and these can never be altered even by the Supreme Being. In short, no soul can hope to attain deliverance (मोक्ष), unless it possesses the

natural eligibility for such deliverance. Even among those who are eligible, no two souls can be found to possess the same degree of eligibility or qualifications. Hence it is that the fruits of deliverance will vary according to the degrees of eligibility of the souls. This is what is generally known as आनन्दतारतम्य or variety in Eternal Bliss. This doctrine is, it may be observed, peculiar to the *Mādhvas*, among the Vedāntins.

According to this school, *Upāsana* means an inquiry into *Brahman* or *God*, and this includes *study*, *investigation*, *reasoning*, *contemplation* and *meditation*. In the absence of any obstruction, *Brahman* is seen in the very birth in which a soul has completed the course of inquiry (or *Upāsana*). Final deliverance or *mōksha* is certain in the case of those who have seen *Brahman*; but it can be actually realized only after the destruction of *Prārabdha-Karma* (or Karma the fruit of which is now being experienced); and this destruction of प्रारब्धकर्म may result (according to its intensity) either at the end of the very birth in which *Brahman* is seen, or in some later birth. *Mōksha* cannot be attained by seeing any form of *Brahman*, but only after seeing the particular form which the Preceptor or Guru prescribes for the soul. When the Preceptor says the sight has been gained, the soul has succeeded in realizing the particular form, and this is what is called (by the *Mādhvas*) विम्बदर्शन.

When this विम्बदर्शन has been secured, the previous and subsequent Karma (the effects of deeds, past and future) will be destroyed, and the *Prārabdha-Karma* alone will remain to be experienced by the soul before deliverance is attained.

According to this school, *Mōksha* or final deliverance from bondage involves four distinct stages—

- (1) Destruction of Karma,
- (2) Departure from the material body,
- (3) The Path to be travelled by the released, and
- (4) The attainment of Eternal Bliss.

After the final destruction of Karma, the eligible soul departs from the gross body and by means of the ethereal or subtle body (सुक्ष्मशरीर) travels in the *Archirādi-mārga* (the Path of *Archis*, etc.) to the Abode of God.

The released having reached *Brahman* enjoy the eternal blessings and remain for ever with Him and under His guidance. They are graded according to their devotion; and the absence of equality does not affect their blessedness. Those who attain *sāyujya-mōksha*, enjoy the blessings along with *Brahman*. Though they are divested of all material body,

still they can enjoy eternal blessings through the person of Brahman. All others (who attain *sālokya*, *sāmīpya* and *sārūpya mōkshas*) enjoy blessings by means of their spiritual body (which is purely composed of knowledge or *jñāna*). The released obtain all their desires by mere *will*; and they may assume, if they please, a body which is made of pure substance (शुद्धसत्त्व) and which is not the result of Karma. The Eternal Happiness enjoyed by the released does not become increased or diminished in the course of their enjoyment.<sup>1</sup>

### THE VIŚIŚHTĀDVAITA SYSTEM

It has been already observed that the term *Viśiśhtādvaita* signifies qualified monism. *Viśiśhta* means qualified, i.e. having as attributes *Chit* (Souls) and *Achit* (Matter); and *Viśiśhtādvaita* may therefore be taken to signify One Reality—Para-Brahman (*Vishnu*) qualified by the attributes Chit and Achit. There are two stages for *Chit* and *Achit*—(1) the causal stage or कारणवस्था and (2) the effectual stage or कार्यविस्था. In the causal stage, i.e. before the evolution, they are said to be सूक्ष्म (subtle); whereas in the effectual stage, after the evolution, they are said to be स्थूल (gross). In both these stages, Brahman or the Supreme Being is qualified by the attributes, Chit and Achit. The Supreme Being is thus inseparably united with Matter and Souls; and the Universe of Matter and Souls forms the body of the Supreme Being. Thus the Supreme Being is not only the Soul of all Matter, but is the Soul of all Souls and is therefore called *Paramātman*. This relation between Brahman and the Universe is clearly established by several Vedic texts, such as—‘यस्यात्मा शरीरं’  
‘यस्य पृथिवी शरीरम्’, ‘नित्यो नियानं चेतनश्चेतनानां’.

It is an admitted fact that words referring to the body of a soul are often applied to the soul also, e.g. ब्राह्मणोऽहम् (I am a Brahman), शूचियोऽसौ (He is a Kshattriya), शुक्लस्वं (You are white). We use the word अहं (I) with reference to the body, when we say स्थूलोऽहं (I am stout), कृशोऽहं (I am lean); and ‘I’ denotes the soul in such examples as—‘I think’, ‘I feel pain or pleasure’, ‘I know this fact’. In the expression ‘my body’, the first person clearly refers to the soul.

In the same way, we find the Supreme Being (the Soul of the Universe) often referred to in the Upanishads by words that are properly

<sup>1</sup> Some of the ideas and expressions in the section relating to the Dvaita system have been borrowed from Mr. S. Subba Rao's translations of the Dvaita works.

applicable to Matter or Souls comprised in the Universe, which is the body of the Supreme Being. Hence arises the great confusion in the interpretation of the Vedic texts. For instance, the word आत्मन् (Ātman) is used to denote, in some places, the individual soul; and in other places, the Supreme Being. In fact, all names are capable of ultimately signifying the Supreme Being—in accordance with the Viśiṣṭādvaitic doctrine about the relation between God and the Universe (शरीरशरीरभाव or the relation between the *body* and its *indweller*, the soul), e.g. *Indra* may refer to the Supreme Being, dwelling in the soul of *Indra* (इन्द्रान्तर्यामिन्). Passages like ‘तत् त्वमसि’ (That thou art) are also to be construed in accordance with this relation between God and the individual souls—each soul being recognized as a body of God. The passage तत्त्वमसि—‘That thou art’ can only mean ‘God in thee is (the same as) that Supreme Being’; and can never be taken to imply an identity of the individual soul with God.

We thus see that the Viśiṣṭādvaita system, while asserting qualified monism, does not ignore the natural differences between the three entities—Matter, Soul and God. The attributes of God are as real as God Himself; that is, the Universe, is *not unreal*.

According to this system—‘all knowledge is real’ (सर्वं ज्ञानं यथार्थं). In refuting ‘certain analogies generally given (by the Advaitin) to show that the scripture, which, being based upon *avidyā* or ignorance, is unreal, may form the means for the attainment of the highest reality known as the *Brahman*’—the following arguments are set forth by the Viśiṣṭādvaitic school. ‘When auspicious and inauspicious dreams give rise to good and bad results in life, the dreams are indeed as really existent as the results they give rise to. When magic, medicinal herbs, incantations, etc., give rise to illusions which cause fear, love, and other emotions, the illusions are as real as the emotions themselves. Death may result from a suspicion of snake-bite and of poisoning; here the suspicion is as real as the death. The reflected image of a thing is as real as the thing itself. Dreams are real even in the absence of the reality of the objects corresponding to them, inasmuch as what is required to make anything the object and the basis of any cognition, is merely the manifestation of that thing to consciousness in some manner or other. Even in the case of the apprehension of the sounds of letters by means of the corresponding written signs, there is no *cognition of the real by means of the unreal*.<sup>1</sup> Similar arguments hold good in disproving the unreality of the Universe.

<sup>1</sup> Vide Prof. M. Rangacharyar's Translation of the *Sri-Bhāṣya*, p. xviii. (Introduction).

By these and other examples, the Viśiṣṭādvaitin proves that the Advaita Doctrine of Māyā is untenable; and holds that the Vedāntic literature, as a whole, supports the reality of all the three entities—Matter, Souls and God. ‘The statement found in the *Vishnu-Purāṇa* (II, 14, 31), and often quoted in support of the Advaita Doctrine—to the effect that “Dualists see things wrongly”—is shown to negative only that kind of dualism which postulates a natural difference in essence between one individual soul and another; but not the real dualism which declares the natural distinction between the ultimate entities, known as God, Soul and Matter.’ We shall now proceed to speak of these three entities:—

(1) God or *Brahman* is defined in this system as a Being, ‘whose flame-like spiritual essence is itself infinite, wholly self-manifest and self-happy, and is the entire opposite of every kind of evil, and the unique seat of every kind of good; who is adorned with hosts of amiable attributes, such as, omniscient, miraculous, all-supporting, omnipotent, inexhaustible, and over-powering all; who is the gracious granter of all kinds of boons, and is possessed of an all-transcendent form; who is the evolver, the preserver and the destroyer of everything created; and who is the fit resort of all aspirants.’

The form of God is five-fold:—

- (1) *Para*—or the Transcendental Form (the Supreme Being) in the Vaikuntha-lōka or the Heavenly Abode of God;
- (2) *Vyūha*—or the Operative Forms (viz. Vāsudeva, Sankarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha) lying on the serpent *Sēsha* in the Milk Sea;
- (3) *Vibhava*—or the Incarnate Form (the Avatāras, such as Varāha, Narasimha, Rāma, and Krishna);
- (4) *Antaryāmin*—or the Pervasive Form (dwelling in the heart of every living being) realized by the Yogins through meditation;
- (5) *Archāvatāra*—or the Image-Form (in temples and houses of worshippers) which God assumes in accordance with the wishes of his devotees.

As regards the Image-Form, Pillai-lkāchārya, the great Viśiṣṭādvaitic teacher of the thirteenth century, says:—

‘The Archā Form consists in the images of Bhagavān (God), which accommodate themselves to the various tastes of His creatures for their worship, having no fixed *form*, but that which the worshipper may choose and desire to have of Him; having no fixed *name* but that which the worshipper may choose and desire to call Him by; all-knowing but seeming as if not-knowing; all-powerful but seeming as if powerless; all-sufficient but seeming as if needy—thus seeming to exchange places, the

worshipped with the worshipper, and choosing to be ocularly manifest to him in temples and homes, in short at all places and at all times desired.' (Vide *Artha-Pāñchaka*, translated by A. G.)

In this place I may say a few words regarding *Image-worship*, which is common to all the Brahmanic systems. There is an interesting point in connexion with the number of categories recognized by the several philosophical schools in the world. If M = Matter,

S = Soul,

G = God;

then, the number of permutations of these *three* taken

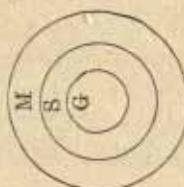
*one* at a time is 3

*two* " 6

*three* " 6

making a total of 15. These *fifteen* varieties, exhaust almost all the philosophical schools in the world; and a complete analysis of these has been furnished by the late Śrī-Yōgi-Pārtha-sārathi Aiyangar Svāmi of Madras, in his English Translation of the *Tattva-traya*. This great scholar has also written a pamphlet on the *Rationale of Image-Worship*, which is worth perusal. (Vide also pp. 43-45, A. Gōvindāchārya's *Vade Mecum of Vedānta*.)

As regards Image-worship, the *Viśiṣṭādvaitic* interpretation is, I believe, quite convincing. Adopting the above symbols, we may represent every living being by three concentric circles thus:—



Since every object in the Universe is pervaded by the All-pervading God (Viśhṇu), we see that in paying homage to any living being, we are not honouring merely the outer form or matter (M), nor even the inner (individual) soul (S) alone, but convey our respects, through the process of meditation, up to the innermost Supreme Soul or God (G). Thus, every living being that is honoured, symbolizes *Viśiṣṭādvaita* (God-qualified by the attributes—*Chit* and *Achit*).

Similarly, whenever we worship an image (of a Deity), that worship is carried, through meditation, up to the Supreme Being, who not only pervades the image (through His all-pervading power); but makes it His special abode (at our request) so as to be within our easy reach.

(II) *Chit* (the individual soul) is defined as a being, distinct from matter (i.e. the body and the senses), and as intelligent, immutable,

incomprehensible, indivisible, unmanifest, self-luminous, spiritually atomic, eternal and blissful. The souls are divided into *five* classes:—

- (1) The *Ever-Free* (*Nitya*), in the holy presence of the Supreme Being, who are ever untainted by worldly bondage. They are ever happy, being engaged in the eternal service of God.
- (2) The *Liberated* (*Mukta*)—who have been freed from worldly bondage by the grace of God: These are also living in the presence of God, and are supremely happy.
- (3) The *Fettered* (*Baddha*)—still subject to bondage, i.e. imprisoned in the material body. They mistake the body for the soul and imagine that the sole aim of life is worldly pleasure or gratification of the senses. They become, therefore, slaves to passion, and tighten the worldly bondage closer and closer around themselves.
- (4) The *Isolate or Self-satisfied* (*Kēvala*)—who after experiencing the miseries of this world, realize the distinction between matter and soul; and succeeding in their attempt to free themselves from bondage, are content with self-enjoyment and do not aspire to know God. They live in a region called *Kaivalya* which is beyond the material world, and is yet outside the Abode of God. Those who attain this kind of *Mōksha* have no chance of reaching the Divine Presence, as they are self-satisfied.
- (5) The *Progressive or Salvation-seeking* (*Mumukshu*)—who are yet living in this world, always leading a pious life; and are engaged in the pursuit of Salvation.

(III) *Achit* (or the non-sentient entity) is defined as that which is non-intelligent, subject to mutation, and enjoyable by souls. It is of three kinds:—

- (1) *Pure-substance* (*Suddha-sattva*)—which belongs to the Abode of God (नित्यविभूति or the Eternal World).
- (2) *Mixed-substance* (*Miśra-sattva*)—which is the seat of *purity* (*sattva*), *turbidity* (*rajas*), and *darkness* (*tamas*); and belongs to this world (लोकविभूति or the Pastime-World).<sup>1</sup>
- (3) *Time*—which is devoid of qualities.

*N.B.*—*Achit* cannot, therefore, be properly translated as *Matter*, if we exclude Time from *Matiestr.* *Space* is not treated as a separate division of *Achit*, as it comes under *Akasa* (Ether), etc. For details, see Sri-Yogi Parthasarathi Aiyangar's Translation of *Tattva-traya* (Srinivasa Varadachari & Co., Madras, 1900).

<sup>1</sup> This world, which is full of joys and sorrows, serves as a play-ground to God and is, therefore, called the *Pastime-World*.

*The Means of Attaining Salvation*

The means of attaining *môksha* or salvation are also of five kinds:—

- (1) *Karma-Yôga*—or the performance of duties enjoined in the *Sâstras*. This is the chief means of attaining *Aisvarya* (worldly prosperity); and is accessory to the *Jñâna-Yôga* which leads to salvation.
- (2) *Jñâna-Yôga*—or the process by which a Yôgin realizes the Antaryâmi form of God by constant meditation. This *Jñâna-Yôga* is the fundamental means of *Kaivalya-môksha*, and is accessory to *Bhakti-Yôga*.
- (3) *Bhakti-Yôga*—or the process by which the soul that has realized the form of God by constant meditation is enabled to make such realization matured into *Love of God*. This is the *direct* means of attaining the Abode of God, called *Vaikuntha* or *Parama-pada*.
- (4) *Prapatti*—or ‘Self-surrender to God’. This is the simplest and at the same time the surest means of reaching the desired end. It is accessible to all, the weak as well as the strong, without distinction of caste, creed, or sex. It consists in resigning one’s self entirely to the Will of God, and performing one’s legitimate duties without attachment to the results thereof.
- (5) *Ächâryâbhîmâna*—or Trust in the Preceptor, who serves as the Mediator between the aspirant soul and God. An individual, having no sufficient strength of mind for Self-surrender (*Prapatti*), has to place entire faith in a competent and compassionate Preceptor, who will adopt the necessary means of saving him (from worldly bondage), just as a loving mother swallows the necessary medicine to cure her suffering baby.

Thus the *Viśiṣṭâdvaita* system provides, for all mankind, the surest and at the same time the simplest means of salvation. The Dravidian Saints (the *Älvârs*) laid much stress on *Bhakti* (Love of God) in their Tamil Sacred Poems—the (Four Thousand) *Divya Prabandha*; and the later Preceptors (the *Ächâryas*)—of whom Śrî-Râmânujâchârya stands the most prominent—freely taught the safest means of *Prapatti* (Self-surrender to God), making it open to all creeds and castes, irrespective of sex. The followers of Śrî-Râmânujâchârya—among whom shine the great Pillai-Lôkâchârya, Vêdânta Dêśika, and Vara-vara-muni<sup>1</sup>—revealed also the still easier and more convenient means of *Ächâryâbhîmâna* (Trust in the Mediator).

<sup>1</sup> It may be observed here that the Śrî-Vaishnavas—the representatives of the *Viśiṣṭâdvaita* system—are divided into two communities:—(1) The *Ten-kalais* (the southern school)—the followers of Pillai-Lôkâchârya and Varavara-muni; and (2) the *Vada-kalais* (the northern

We may now direct our attention to a brief comparison of the three systems, with reference to the teachings of the great Reformers of the respective sects. Professor Hopkins, in speaking of Śankara and Rāmānuja, says:—

' Śankara's *Brahma* is the one and only being, pure being, or pure thought. Thought is not an attribute of *Brahma*, it is *Brahma*. Opposed to this pure being (thought) stands *māyā*, illusion, the material cause of the seen world. It is neither being, nor not being; it is the cause of the appearance of things, in that it is associated with *Brahma*, and in so far only is *Brahma* rightly the Lord. The infinite part of each individual is *Brahma*; the finite part is *māyā*. Thus Badarāyaṇa (author of the Vēdānta Śūtras) says, that the individual is only illusion. Rāmānuja, on the other hand, teaches a *Brahma* that is not only universal, but is the universal personal Lord, a supreme, conscious and willing God. Far from being devoid of attributes, like Śankara's *Brahma*, the *Brahma* of Rāmānuja has all attributes, chief of which is thought or intelligence. The Lord contains in himself the elements of that plurality which Śankara regards as illusion. As contrasted with the dualistic Śāṅkhya philosophy, both of these systems inculcate monism. But according to Śankara all difference is illusion; while according to Rāmānuja *Brahma* is not homogeneous, but in the diversity of the world about us He is truly manifested. Śankara's *māyā* is Rāmānuja's body of (*Brahma*) the Lord. Śankara's personal God exists only by collusion with illusion, and hence is illusory. The *Brahma* of Rāmānuja is a personal God, the omnipotent, omniscient, Lord of a real world. Moreover, from an eschatological point of view, Śankara explains salvation, the release from rebirth, *samsāra*, as complete union with this unqualified *Brahma*, consequently as loss of individuality as well as loss of happiness. But Rāmānuja defines salvation as the departure from earth for ever of the individual spirit, which enters a heaven, where it will enjoy perennial bliss. Rāmānuja's doctrine inspires the sectarian pantheism of the present time. In this there is a metaphysical basis of conduct, a personal God to be loved or feared, the hope of bliss hereafter. In its essential features, it is a very old belief, far older than the philosophy which formulates it. Thus after the hard saying "fools desire heaven", this desire re-asserted itself; and under Rāmānuja's genial interpretation of the Vēdānta Śūtras, the pious man was enabled to build up his cheerful hope again, withal on the basis of a logic as difficult to controvert as was that of Śankara himself.' (*The Religions of India*—pp. 496-8.)

school)—the followers of Vēdānta Dēśika. The doctrinal differences between the two schools have been fully discussed by Śrimān A. Gōvindāchārya of Mysore in the J. R. A. S. (October, 1910).

The language used here seems to me rather strong. Western scholars<sup>1</sup> appear to have not fully realized the true spirit of Śankara's doctrine. Śankara's practical (*Saguṇa*) Brahman is not very different from Rāmānuja's Brahman; and as we have already seen, Śankara himself was a staunch devotee of *Saguṇa-Brahman*. He clearly admits, in the following passage from his Commentary on the *Sanatsujātīya* (*Mahā-Bhārata, Udyoga Parva*) I. 18, that salvation can be secured by worshipping *Saguṇa-Brahman* :—

अथवा—‘एवं हि विद्वान् परियाति तत्’—इति पाठे सगुणं ब्रह्म विद्वान् तत् ब्रह्मलोकादावपासनफलं परियाति प्राप्नोति । तथा अर्धजातं च अस्य वदन्ति वेदाः । कीदृशं वदन्ति? स नेह आयाति, स विद्वान् इह अस्मिन् लोके कर्मबन्नायाति न जायते; किन्तु ब्रह्मोपासनया अमार्गान् विषद्भार्गान् निहन्ति । एवं तत् गत्वा संसारहेतुनमार्गान् निहन्त्य परात्मा सन् कालेन परं ब्रह्म प्रयातोर्यर्थः ॥

If Śankara had doubted the virtue of meditating on *Saguṇa-Brahman*, an earnest philosopher of his eminence would never have wasted his precious moments in acts of piety towards such a Being, and in composing so many *stotrās* in praise thereof. Śankara's practical life would, therefore, justify the conclusion that his *Para-Mukti* (Absolute Liberation) was put forth by him only as a philosophical ideal, and that he himself regarded it as impossible of attainment by frail mortals.

As regards the doctrine of *Māyā*, it may be observed that the word *Māyā* is taken to mean *Prakṛiti* (Matter) by the School of Rāmānuja, relying on such texts as—

(1) मायां तु प्रकृतिं विद्यान्मायिनं तु महेश्वरम् ॥ (*Śvet. Up.*, iv. 10.)

(2) अस्मान्मायी सृजते विश्वमेतत्सिमंधान्यो मायया सन्निरुद्धः

(*Śvet. Up.*, iv. 9.)

Śankarāchārya, himself, often makes *Prakṛiti* synonymous with *Māyā*. (*Vide* his Commentary on *Gītā*, vii. 4, xv. 17, etc.) Both Śankara and Rāmānuja hold that *Brahman* is the material cause (उपादानकारण) of the Universe, through the attribute (or property) *Māyā* or *Prakṛiti*.

The most important point to be noted in this connexion is that even Śankarāchārya regards *Matter* and *Soul* as properties of the Lord and as eternal with Him. (*Vide* Commentary on *Gītā*, xiii. 19.)

<sup>1</sup> Even here, in India, there are serious misconceptions regarding the doctrine of Śankara. Some enthusiastic amateurs have even attempted to reconcile Śankara's orthodox system and the heterodox Buddhism; and this is perhaps due to the few points of resemblance between Śankara's school and the Yōgāchāra School of Buddhism.

नियतादीश्वरस्य तत्प्रकृत्योरपि युक्तं नियत्वेन भवितुम् । प्रकृतिद्वयवत्वमेव हीश्वरस्य इश्वरत्वम् । याम्यां प्रकृतिम्यामीश्वरो जगदुत्पत्तिस्थितिप्रलयहेतुः, ते अनादी सत्यौ संसारस्य कारणम् ॥

In the verse in question he takes the word अनादी to mean eternal (नियत)<sup>1</sup> as applied to *Matter* and *Soul*, and further on in the commentary, he himself refutes the theory of those who would understand the word अनादी (in the verse) as meaning न आदी, i.e. not existing at the beginning.

Further the term मिथ्या as applied to the Universe (cf. जगन्मिथ्या, etc.) is often used by Śankarāchārya in the sense of अनियत (non-eternal).<sup>2</sup>

If these are the real views of Śankarāchārya, as regards the points in question, we may venture to say that there would be practically little or no difference between his school and that of Rāmānuja; but these are points which require a careful examination by impartial scholars.

Next, comparing the school of Rāmānujāchārya with that of Madhvāchārya, we find the following few points of difference:—

- (1) Rāmānuja holds that the individual souls are all similar in their natural essence (खृष्ण), whereas Madhva regards them as essentially different.
- (2) According to Rāmānuja, the material cause of the Universe is God Himself, which the school of Madhva denies.
- (3) Rāmānuja regards the Universe as the *body* of God—which relationship is not recognized by Madhvāchārya.
- (4) According to Rāmānuja, no soul is, by nature, disqualified for salvation, whereas Madhva holds that there is a class of souls totally ineligible by nature for salvation and therefore doomed to eternal perdition.
- (5) In the view of Rāmānuja, there is no difference of any kind between one liberated soul and another in the enjoyment of Eternal Bliss in Heaven; but in Madhva's view, differences in such enjoyment do exist, in degree and quality, proportionate to the differences in the natural essence of the souls.

I shall now refer to some of the common points of the three systems:—

<sup>1</sup> This is certainly conflicting with his own statements elsewhere. (Vide e.g. *Vivekachādāmaṇi*, st. 200-1.)

<sup>2</sup> Vide विवेकचृडामणि. (St. 20-22, etc.)

- (1) All the three systems are based upon the authority of the Śrutis (the Upanishads), the Smritis, the Itihāsas and the Purāṇas.
- (2) All believe that the beginningless *karma* is the cause of worldly bondage, and that the soul will undergo birth after birth until the whole of *karma* is exhausted.
- (3) All recognize that the study of the Vēdānta is essential for the attainment of *Jñāna* (wisdom), which serves as a passport to the Heavenly Abode.
- (4) *Bhakti* or Love of God is the most perfect means of salvation according to all the three systems.
- (5) Image-Worship is an essential feature of all the Brāhmaṇic systems; and Nārāyaṇa (Vishnu), in various forms, is generally worshipped as the Supreme Being by all the three sects.
- (6) The Spiritual Preceptor is the Mediator between the individual soul and God; and is revered as equal to God in several respects.
- (7) Divine Grace alone can ultimately secure salvation, as human efforts by themselves will be fruitless.
- (8) All recognize that salvation consists in the attainment of Brahman, which is Eternal Bliss.

Before concluding, it is my duty to acknowledge my indebtedness to those scholars, Indian and European, whose ideas and expressions I have borrowed in preparing this lecture.

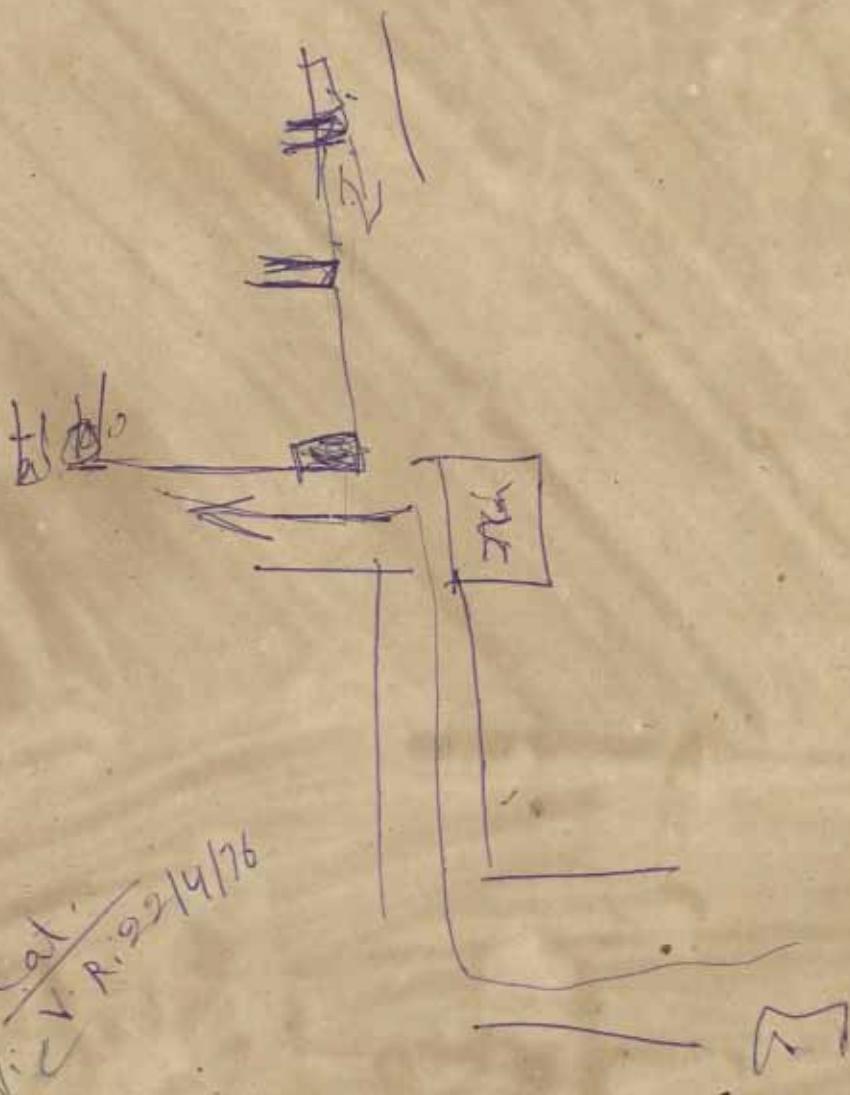
Let us now conclude with a verse in praise of the Supreme Light shining throughout the Vēdānta:—

“यन्मङ्गलाय महते जगतामुशन्ति क्रिविष्टपान्ध्यपि पदानि यदाश्रयाणि ।  
कन्दामहे सरसिजेक्षणमद्वितीयं वेदान्तवेद्यमनिदंप्रथमं महस्तत् ॥”

(*Vaikuntha-stava*, st. 4.)



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